



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD



Evaluating the Impact of Newer Researcher Training & Development: Which Direction Forward?



Incorporating the UK GRAD Programme and UKHERD



Evaluating Researcher Training and Development: History, challenges, methodology and implementation

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1. A brief history
2. Drivers for evaluation
3. The Rugby Team Impact Framework
4. Implementation plans and support to the sector
5. Evaluation activity
 1. Completed
 2. Planned

A brief history...



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1. Roberts money payments started in 2003/04
2. Rugby Team formed in 2005 to '*propose a meaningful and workable way of evaluating the effectiveness of skills development in early career researchers*'
3. Draft Rugby Team Impact Framework presented at Roberts Policy Forum 2008
4. Rugby Team Impact Framework 'published' at Vitae conference September 2008

Who are the Stakeholders?



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Researchers

Higher Education Institutions

Government

Funders of Research

Supervisors and Principal Investigators

Employers (HE and non-HE)

Drivers for Evaluation*



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1. Demonstrate appropriateness of emphasis on skills development
2. Provide feedback to funding bodies to help them evaluate effectiveness and impact of investment
3. Inform enhancement of researcher experience
4. Assess impact of initiatives (esp Roberts Funding) on employability of researchers

What are the key evaluation challenges?



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General Issues

1. The problem of attribution
2. The subjective nature of participant views
3. Metrics

What are the key evaluation challenges?



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Researcher Training and Development Specific Issues

1. Existing evaluation models developed for the commercial sector
2. There are ideas in L & T type assessment but application more difficult for non-compulsory programmes
3. The area has grown significantly only in recent years

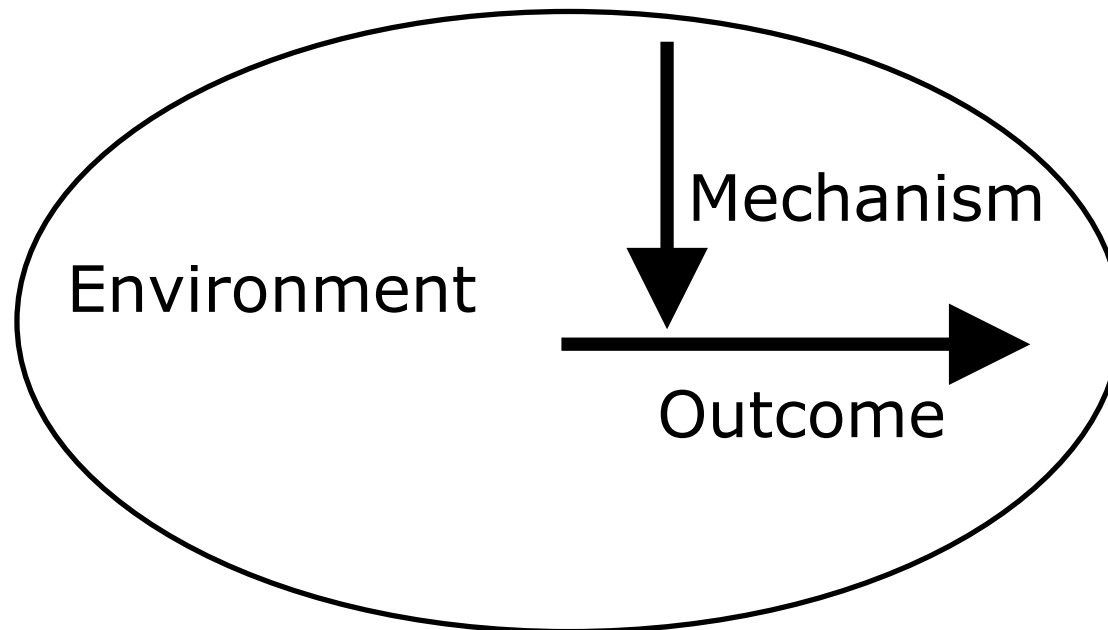


Evaluation starting points 1/2

Know what the aim of the training activity is at the outset. i.e. What is the training need?

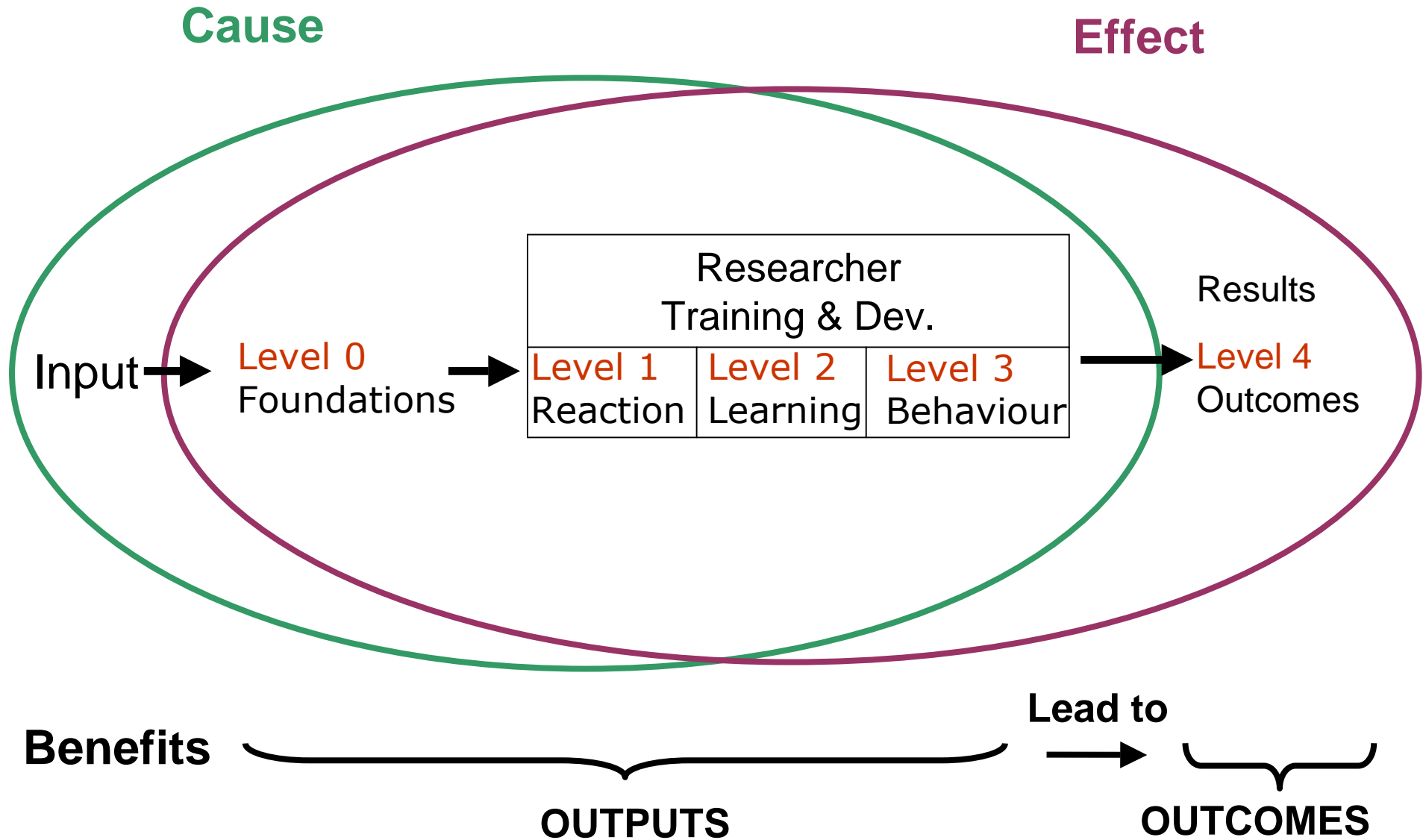
How will the activity contribute to the needs of stakeholders?

Evaluation starting points 2/2



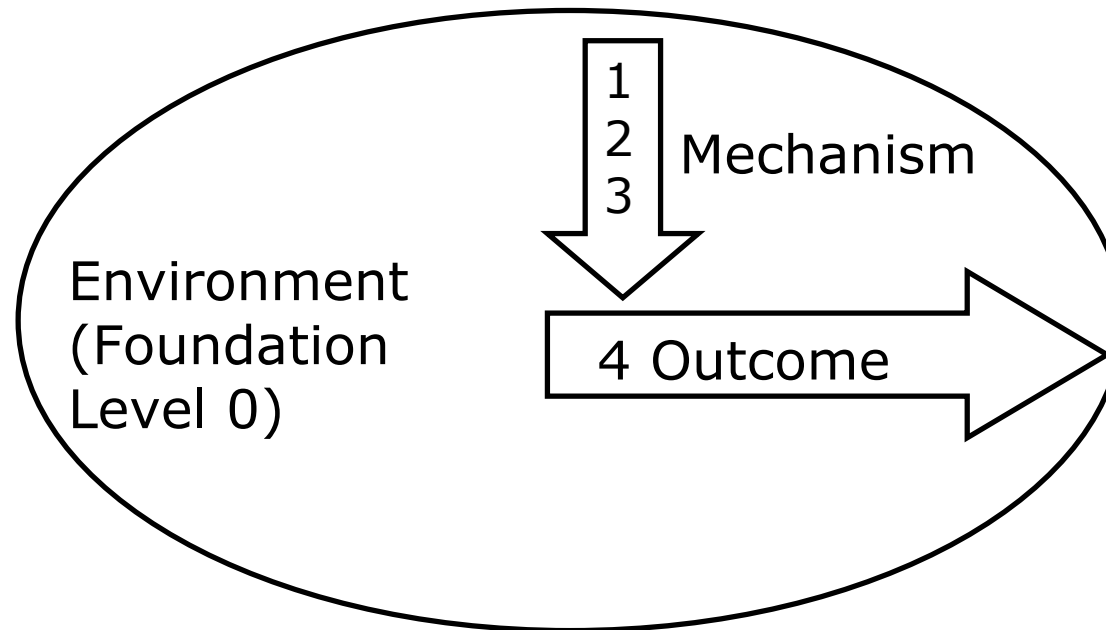
Environment + Mechanism = Outcome

Rugby Team Impact Framework: Logic Diagram - IMPACT levels (levels 0 - 4)





Impact Framework and Evaluation Theory



Environment + Mechanism = Outcome

(Adapted from Pawson, R., and Tilley, N., 'Realistic Evaluation' SAGE Publications (1997)
ISBN 978-0-7619-5009-7)

What do you evaluate?



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Who is the stakeholder?

What is important to them?

What was the training need identified that resulted in a particular training activity being developed?

What do you evaluate?



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Ensure personal and professional development activity contributes clearly to university strategy and the needs of all stakeholders

‘Growing Research Income and Performance’ (GRIP) Strategic initiative



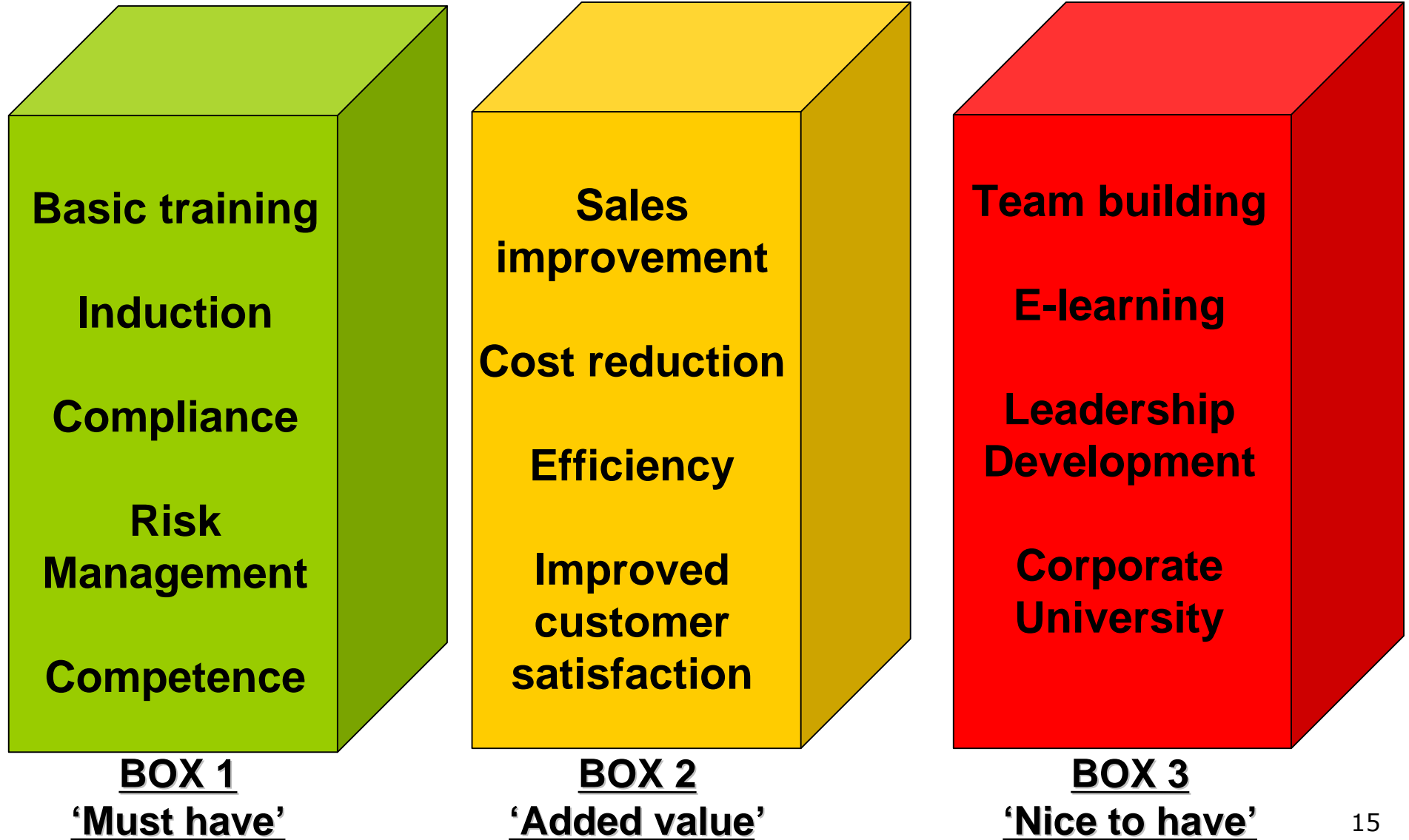
The aim of provision is ‘to enable researchers to develop their research performance, employability, professionalism and engagement with society’



Specific activity such as ‘Grant Writing Action Learning Sets’
‘Project Managing Your Research Degree’ ‘Fellowships’

The 3 Box System (www.paulkearns.co.uk)

PRIORITY 1 ← **PRIORITY 2** ← **PRIORITY 3**
Validate Evaluate & ROI Shift



How do you evaluate?



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Specific Activity Evaluation

Example Process – ‘Project Managing Your Research Degree’

Level 0 – Focus group re aims. Baseline Needs analysis data, MBTI, Pedagogy of session

Level 1 – ‘Happy Sheets’, email follow up one month later

Level 2 - End of session review, application by participants of ideas in session to their specific projects

Level 3 – Needs Analysis monitoring, progress monitoring, supervisory views, 360° Analysis

Level 4 – Success Case Method*, Data dredge, Focus Groups

* Brinkerhoff, R., ‘Telling Training’s Story: Evaluation Made Simple, Credible and Effective’ Berrett-Koehler (2006) ISBN-10: 1576751864; ISBN-13: 978-1576751862

How much evaluation?



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What is realistic for a practitioner?

Routine:

- Evaluation of all activity using exit 'Happy Sheets'
- Collation of basic data e.g. participation rates
- Summary of routine evaluation in an annual report
- Participation in a regular survey such as PRES

How much evaluation?



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What is realistic for a Practitioner?

Additional:

- **Annually:** One or two more detailed evaluations of specific activity using a methodology such as the Rugby Team Impact Framework
- **Periodically:** Every two to three years review all the Foundation Level 0 aspects.



1. The RTIF is referred to in the Roberts reporting letter of August 08
2. HEIs are encouraged to add examples of evaluation practice to the Vitae database of practice
3. RTIF published at Vitae Conference Sep 08
4. Policy Forum 2009 – a first update report on evaluation activity in the sector



5. September 2009 Vitae Conference update report
6. September 2010 Vitae Conference – A review of evaluation in the sector primarily based upon the database of practice
7. Possible independent evaluation
8. In general: Activity (e.g. events) targeted at nurturing and supporting evaluation research

Support and Communication mechanisms



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1. JISCmail email network 'Evaluating Impact'
2. Vitae Hub Events – Y&NE, SWW, NW held events in 2008 + Y&NE, NW Hub and S&NI Hub in 2009
3. Vitae Hub newsletter updates
4. Updates at Policy Forum/Conference
5. SRHE – 'A Guide to evaluation of training and development programmes for postgraduate and other newer researchers'
6. New International Journal of Researcher Development

Evaluation activity – completed projects



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1. Skills perception/needs analysis – Imperial/Manchester
2. PRES findings Cardiff/Durham/Bangor
3. Leicester GRADschool follow up
4. Southampton – Outreach
5. UEA - Teamworking

Evaluation activity – planned projects



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1. Projects looking at single impact levels
2. Projects looking at multiple levels
3. Projects looking at workshop activities and whole programmes
4. Longitudinal studies (e.g. RCUK)
5. Projects looking at; entrepreneurship, public engagement, grant writing etc.

Evidence Table: Mapping Projects against the RTIF



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Project	0	1	2	3	4
Leeds	✓				
Imperial	✓	✓	✓		
Cardiff	✓	✓			
Leicester		✓	✓	✓	✓
Southampton		✓	✓	✓	✓



1. The sector is working collaboratively and effectively to build the evidence base
2. RTIF provides language such that evaluations of differing methods can be understood in the context of a single framework
3. The level of activity across the sector provides a very positive outlook for building the evidence base
4. Further reports of activity will be produced in the coming years



Are there any questions?

Questions 1/3 - Critique



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1. What do you think about the approach described?
2. How could the evaluation methodology be enhanced?
3. How could the implementation nationally be enhanced?

Questions 2/3 – Gap Analysis



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4. In your view are there any significant gaps in how the researcher training and development agenda is supporting the needs of its stakeholders?
5. Are there any gaps in how the agenda or its evaluation supports the development of academic practice and the next generation of academics?

Questions 3/3 – The future



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6. What are the key pieces of evidence that would contribute to confirming the sustainability of the agenda in the minds of the various stakeholders?
7. Therefore, what are the priorities and direction that evaluation should be taking?

